Timber contract in the Ghat road.

159. Mr. P. Kumaran Ezhuthassan.—Will the Government be pleased to state:—

(a) who is the contractor who has purchased the teak trees on the Ghat road;

(b) was the contract given after tenders were invited;

(c) if not, is there any special reason for not calling for tender;

(d) whether there was not at the time of the said contract another contractor for the Ghat road; was he at least informed of the proposed contract;

(e) was the contract given for trees standing in any specified area for a lump amount or for trees cut and measured subsequently and fixing a price per candy of such timber;

(f) has the contractor been permitted to convert timber from the forest itself; is the measurement taken after conversion or before; what is the usual practice; why this exception;

(g) which is more advantageous to the Government (a) to measure before or after conversion;

(b) to sell in lot or by candy measurement after collection;

(h) what is the rate per candy allowed to the contractor mentioned in sub-division (a);

(i) was the contract given at one time or at different times; if at different times are the rates the same on all occasions;

(j) has the sale been by private arrangement on all or any of the occasions;

(k) has there been complaints that trees have been cut from outside the boundaries;

has there been any enquiry into these complaints;

what is the result of the enquiry;

(l) will the papers connected with the enquiry or any portion thereof be placed on the Council table?

Mr. K. Ramunni Menon.—(a) Mr. R. Viswanathan Chetty of Vallanghy.

(b) No.

(c) Yes. When permission was first accorded to the P. W. D. for the felling and removal of trees standing on the road-alignment, no purchaser could be found for them and it was therefore ordered by the Conservator that the trees may be left where they are at the stumps. It was subsequently arranged that since the trees to be removed stood on areas included within the Pothundi fuel coupe, the coupe contractor Mr. R. V. Chetty should fell and remove the trees as required by the P. W.

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Department. Mr. Chetty being the earth-works contractor for the Ghat road he felled the trees and left them at site after receiving felling charges from that Department. He however failed to remove them after payment, as he did not find it worth while to do so owing to the poor quality of the bulk of trees felled and the difficulty of transport from steep hill sides in the case of the valuable species. It was also found that the trees felled were getting buried under the heaps of earth resulting from the earth-work of the road. It was only the earth-works contractor that had the facilities for removing the timber from site before being covered up by the earth thrown out in the course of road-construction. In order to prevent the loss that thus resulted to the Department, an agreement was come to with the earth-works contractor Mr. R. V. Chetty by which he agreed to purchase teak and rosewood (the other species removed being mostly valueless saplings) resulting from the fellings on the alignment. Conversion of logs into scantlings had to be allowed as a special case, since transport in logform was found to be impracticable from the steep-slopes along which the alignment passed. Under the circumstances mentioned calling of tenders could not have served any useful purpose.

(d) There was no other contractor at that time.

(e) Contract was given for the purchase of teak and rose-wood standing on the alignment of the new Ghat road, fixing a rate per candy for timber removed.

(f) Yes.

Before and after conversion.

That will depend upon the condition of sale.

No reply necessary.

(g) (a) That will depend upon the quality of timber and the rate fixed.

(b) That depends upon the rate offered.

(h) Rs. 14 per candy of teak and Rs. 19 per candy of rose-wood the contractor not being allowed to claim felling charges from the Public Works Department.

(i) Only at one time.

(j) The sale was by negotiation and there was only one occasion for it.

(k) None except a pseudonymous article in the news paper "Ezhuthassan" of 24th Meenam 1105.

Yes.

The allegation in the article was found false.

(l) There are no papers to be placed. The result is the hard fact ascertained on inspection.

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